

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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O 021344Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5392

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 3938

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS SF ECON

SUBJ: SOUTH AFRICA ON EVE OF ZURICH MEETING

1. AFTER TEN WEEKS
OF DISTURBANCES, A RELATIVE LULL
SEEMS TO BE SETTLING OVER BLACK AND COLORED TOWNSHIPS.
HOW LONG THIS WILL LAST IS IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL. MINISTER
OF JUSTICE AND POLICE KRUGER HAS SAID PUBLICLY THE
FIRES OF UNREST ARE BURNING THEMSELVES OUT AND HE IS
READY TO TALK TO RECOGNIZED BLACK LEADERS ABOUT THEIR
REAL AND IMAGINED GRIEVANCES. A PAUSE IN THE VIOLENCE
MAY WELL BE IN THE MAKING, BUT IN THE ABSENCE OF
FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT'S APARTHEID POLICIES,
IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO ASSUME THAT BLACK AND COLORED
YOUTH, RADICALIZED BY THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PAST TWO
AND A HALF MONTHS,
WILL LONG REMAIN QUIESCENT.

2. THE LAST ORGANIZED EFFORT OF THE MILITANTS WAS THE
MAJOR WORK BOYCOTT IN SOWETO FROM AUGUST 23 TO 25.
THIS PRODUCED VERY MIXED RESULTS. THE INITIAL
PHASES WERE QUITE SUCCESSFUL BUT IT WAS APPARENT
THAT INTIMIDATION AND DISRUPTION OF TRANSPORT FACILITIES
HAD MORE TO DO WITH THE STAY-AWAY THAN CONVICTION OR
PERSUASION. AS THE BOYCOTT PROGRESSED, IT LOST
EFFECTIVENESS AND IN THE END DEGENERATED INTO A BLOODY
BLACK-AGAINST-BLACK CONFLICT WHICH OVERSHADOWED THE
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PROTEST EFFORT AND LEFT A RESIDUE OF FEAR AND BITTERNESS

AMONG BLACK GROUPS IN SOWETO. THIS TURN OF EVENTS SERVED THE PURPOSES OF THE GOVERNMENT. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE THAT POLICE AUTHORITIES TO MATED, IF NOT

ENCOURAGED, IMPIS FROM THE HOSTELS IN THIS ACTION.

3. MEANWHILE, IN AN EFFORT TO DEPRIVE THE PROTEST MOVEMENT OF ITS LEADERSHIP, THE SAG, BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE KRUGER'S OWN PUBLIC ADMISSION, HAS DETAINED OVER 800 PERSONS UNDER VARIOUS SECURITY MEASURES. THE MASSIVE ROUNDUP COVERING LEADERS OF MOST BLACK, AND SOME COLORED, ORGANIZATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS SUGGESTS THAT THE SAG DOES NOT KNOW WHO IS DIRECTING THE CURRENT UNREST BUT HOPES THROUGH THE DRAGNET TECHNIQUE TO TAKE THE LEADERSHIP OUT OF CIRCULATION. WHETHER THERE IS A CAUSE-AND-EFFECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DETENTIONS AND THE PRESENT RELATIVE LULL IN THE DISTURBANCES REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

4. FOLLOWING THE INITIAL VIOLENCE IN SOWETO LAST JUNE, THE GOVERNMENT STARTED TALKS WITH BLACK LEADERS (URBAN BANTU COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE OF 30) BUT SUSPENDED CONTACTS FOLLOWING THE SECOND ROUND OF DISTURBANCES. MINISTER OF JUSTICE KRUGER, WHO HAS BEEN THE LAW ENFORCER AND SPOKESMAN FOR THE GOVERNMENT THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD, HAD IN RECENT DAYS EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN RENEWING THE DIALOGUE. HE HAS CAREFULLY QUALIFIED WITH WHOM HE IS PREPARED TO MEET, RULING OUT LEADERS OF THOSE ORGANIZATIONS WHICH WE BELIEVE MORE NEARLY REFLECT THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE PROTESTING YOUTH. HOWEVER UNWISE THIS ATTITUDE MAY BE, WE THINK THAT WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO DO TO MEET THE GRIEVANCES IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE ORIENTATION OF THE GROUP WITH WHOM THEY ARE DISCUSSED. SO FAR THE SAG HAS GIVEN NO CLEAR SIGNAL AS TO HOW FAR IT IS WILLING TO GO. THE MEMORANDUM OF THE POWERFUL CHAMBER OF INDUSTRIES OF THE TRANSVAAL, THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF THE HOMELAND LEADERS, AND THE STATEMENT OF THE GENERAL

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SECRETARIAT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE SPELL OUT THE RANGE OF STEPS WHICH MIGHT BE TAKEN BUT THE SAG HAS NOT COMMENTED PUBLICLY ON ANY OF THEM.

NOTE BY OC/T: SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 3938, PARA 2 AS RECEIVED. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5393

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRETORIA 3938

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5. WE ARE RECEIVING REPORTS THAT WITHIN THE CABINET
THERE HAVE BEEN EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS OF THE CONCESSIONS

THAT MIGHT BE MADE TO THE BLACKS AND COLOREDS.
ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, THE DIVISIONS HAVE BEEN
SHARP, BUT THOSE FAVORING MEANINGFUL CHANGE APPEAR
TO BE CARRYING THE DAY. THERE IS WIDE-SPREAD PUBLIC
SPECULATION--AND ANTICIPATION--THAT THE SECOND ROUND
OF KISSINGER-VORSTER TALKS TO BE FOLLOWED BY A SERIES OF
MAJOR NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESSES WILL RESULT IN THE
GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCING A NEW DISPENSATION FOR BLACKS
AND COLOREDS. CERTAINLY THIS ARRAY OF MEETINGS PROVIDES
THE MECHANISM WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER CUSTOMARILY USES
FOR CONSULTATION WITH THE PARTY LEADERSHIP PREPARATORY
TO
MAJOR POLICY ANNOUNCEMENTS. HOPEFULLY THIS WILL BE
THE RESULT. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE STATEMENT ISSUED
BY VORSTER YESTERDAY (PRETORIA 3932) STATING THAT NO
OUTSIDE PERSON OR COUNTRY DICTATED SOUTH AFRICA'S
DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES (BEING INTERPRETED HERE
AS A LIGHTLY VEILED REFERENCE TO THE SECRETARY'S
PHILADELPHIA SPEECH THE NIGHT BEFORE) DOES NOT NECESSARILY
REFLECT INTRANSIGENCE ON DOMESTIC CHANGES. HE MAY HAVE
CONSIDERED THE STATEMENT NECESSARY FOR DOMESTIC
CONSUMPTION AND HELPFUL TO HIS POSITION IN THE ZURICH

TALKS.

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6. COMPLICATING VORSTER'S POLITICAL PROBLEMS IS THE DEPRESSED STATE OF THE ECONOMY. THE SECURITY SITUATION COUNSELS BUILDING UP MILITARY DEFENSES AND EXPANDING SELF-SUFFICIENCY CAPABILITIES BOTH OF WHICH THE SAG IS DOING AT THE COST OF GREAT PRESSURE ON FOREIGN RESERVES. IN PREVIOUS YEARS THE GOLD PRICE AND FOREIGN FLOWS HELPED TO OFFSET THE DRAIN, BUT TODAY THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY PICTURE HAS MADE FOREIGN INVESTORS WARY AND SECURITIES INCREASINGLY HARD TO MARKET. TO COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE, THE SAG HAS HAD TO MOVE

TOWARD GREATER BELT TIGHTENING AT HOME, WITH A FURTHER DEPRESSING EFFECT ON THE ECONOMY. THE PRINCIPAL VICTIMS OF THE RESESSION ARE THE BLACKS. WORKER LAY-OFFS HAVE BEEN ALMOST ENTIRELY IN THIS POPULATION GROUP. CUT-BACKS IN PUBLIC SPENDING HAVE FORECLOSOD SPENDING ON URGENT PROJECTS IN BLACK AREAS. WHILE THE MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM OUTLOOK FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S ECONOMY RUNS FROM ENCOURAGING

TO GOOD, IT IS THE SHORT-TERM IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION (RUNNING AT ABOUT 11 PER CENT) WHICH CONCERNS VORSTER AS HE TRIES TO DAMPEN BLACK UNREST WHILE MAINTAINING WHITE SUPPORT FOR ACTIONS HE NEEDS TO TAKE IN RHODESIA, NAMIBIA AND ON RACIAL ISSUES AT HOME.

7. IN SUM, VORSTER FINDS HIMSELF HEMMED IN BETWEEN BLACK UNREST AND SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT AND MOUNTING PRESSURES FOR ACTION IN BORDER AREAS. ALL INTERACT TO COMPLICATE WHAT HE MAY BE PREPARED TO DO MC#A GIVEN PROBLEM. THE COMPLICATIONS ARE PRIMARILY WITH HIS WHITE CONSTITUENCY WHICH HE MUST TAKE ALONG WITH HIM IN ORDER TO OBTAIN PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT AND MAINTAIN THE UNITY OF THE NATIONAL PARTY. EVENTS DEMAND THAT HE MOVE BOLDLY ON MANY FRONTS SIMULTANEOUSLY AND HE IS WORRIED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF SO HEAVY A DOSE OF MEDICI ON AN AFRIKANERDOM NOT ACCUSTOMED TO FAST CHANGE. THIS IS PERHAPS THE OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION IN HIS PLANNING AS HE ENTERS THE ZURICH TALKS.
BOWDLER

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